

## **Columbia County Growth Management Plan Update Community Workshop Summaries**

### **Overview**

On June 23, 2005, two community workshops were conducted as part of the Growth Management Plan Update for Columbia County. These workshops were scheduled for the Appling Area and the Harlem/Grovetown Area with the purpose of gaining input from the community on what they consider to be issues and opportunities within Columbia County for the next 20 years. The following is a brief summary of the two workshops.

### **Harlem and Grovetown Area Workshop Summary**

June 23, 2005

Harlem High School

The presentation covered the growth management planning process, the draft community assessment, and a discussion of the nodal development concept. Discussion focused on the nodal development concept, especially its relation to traffic congestion.

Meeting attendees expressed approval overall for the content and direction of the growth management plan update thus far.

### **Priorities and Issues**

Meeting attendees were presented with the priorities identified by the steering committee, and agreed that these were appropriate priorities for the growth management plan update.

Some attendees were concerned with the county's plans to extend water and sewer, and wanted to know what the current plans for water and sewer extension are.

There were questions about future road improvements in the Harlem and Appling areas of the county, especially road widening, installation of turning lanes on certain state routes, and possible new road extension projects. The consultants and county staff took note of these questions and provided contact information for the county engineer for a discussion of the county's transportation plan.

Traffic congestion was a concern of several meeting attendees. Some attendees suggested that high-density housing was the cause of traffic congestion. The consultants explained that the prevailing knowledge among planners is that density and mixed use in appropriate places can help alleviate traffic congestion. Meeting attendees wanted to understand how the land use plan affects and is informed by the county's transportation plan.

Other concerns by the attendees were about guiding the location commercial development, dealing with abandoned commercial development, and guiding the mix of commercial development.

## **Appling Area Workshop Summary**

June 23, 2005

Board of Education Building

The presentation covered the growth management planning process, the draft community assessment, and a discussion of the nodal development concept. Participant were interested in the nodal development concept particularly, the implementation and regulation of nodes.

Meeting attendees expressed overall approval of the nodal concept and the idea that the Appling area should remain rural in character, but with some local services for the residents.

### **Priorities and Issues**

Attendees were very interested in how growth would be contained/managed around the nodes and expressed a need to develop benchmarks that would help policy-makers manage growth in the nodes and determine when it might be appropriate for a node to expand.

Community members also expressed interest in the relationship of developed lands in nodes and taxes on lands adjacent to proposed nodes. They were informed that the tax rate is the same throughout the county, but the value of the property might change.

There was a general consensus for the proposed nodes for the Appling area; however, the idea was introduced to examine a potential node at the interchange of Appling-Harlem Rd. and I-20. Several individuals stated that the access to the highway makes it a good location for a node. It was also stressed that any future nodes at I-20 should include several uses – industrial, retail and residential so that people could live close to where they work as opposed to a single use. It was also expressed that the county should be working along with neighboring McDuffie County and their plans to build an industrial corridor along I-20.

Several community members stressed maintaining the “rural” character of the area. They also suggested a bike path along Appling to Harlem Rd. as there seems to be a lot of cyclists in the area competing with large trucks on the road.

Other concerns expressed by the participants related to the expansion of infrastructure and whether the western area of the county is given strong consideration when infrastructure policies are reviewed.